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Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

Summary record of the 3rd meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 12 June 2017, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela)

Contents

Tribute to the memory of Miguel D'Escoto, former President of the General Assembly

Statement by the Chair

Adoption of the agenda

Organization of work

Requests for hearing

Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations

Dissemination of information on decolonization

Question of sending visiting missions to Territories

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Tribute to the memory of Miguel D'Escoto, former President of the General Assembly

1. **The Chair**, on behalf of all Committee members, paid tribute to the memory of Miguel D'Escoto, former President of the General Assembly.

2. *At the invitation of the Chair, the members of the Committee observed a minute of silence.*

Statement by the Chair

3. **The Chair** said that there was a sense of urgency within the Committee to achieve concrete results as the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism came to an end. The work of the Committee had been stagnant in recent years, and it risked failure and irrelevance. Although a number of reasons could be cited, it was due in large part to the attitude of the administering Powers, which dedicated more effort to maintaining the status quo than to promoting self-determination and decolonization. Recently, however, there had been renewed interest in the work of the Committee within the United Nations system, owing to the increasingly complex and interconnected geopolitical environment. Member States must therefore renew their commitment to decolonization and set aside national and regional positions governed by self-interest. The Committee must be an effective mechanism to achieve freedom and pave the way to self-determination.

4. Member States, observers and petitioners should contribute constructively to the meeting in accordance with the standards and practices governing the United Nations. In that regard, he condemned the use of violence, threats, disrespectful remarks, off-topic discussions and any other strategies meant to sabotage the Committee's work. Lastly, the Committee should express its solidarity with the Palestinian people, call for an end to Israeli occupation and support the work of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

Adoption of the agenda

5. *The agenda was adopted.*

Organization of work (A/AC.109/2017/L.2)

6. **The Chair** drew attention to the programme of work and timetable (A/AC.109/2017/L.2) and the updated version circulated. He took it that the Committee wished to approve the tentative programme of work and timetable for 2017, with the understanding that they might be subsequently revised if required.

7. *It was so decided.*

8. He reminded the Committee that the delegations of Algeria, Argentina, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Gabon, Germany, Guatemala, Guinea, Lebanon, Mexico, Morocco, Namibia, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, South Africa, Spain, United Arab Emirates, Uruguay and the African Union had indicated their wish to participate in the work of the Committee as observers. In addition, the delegations of Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Mozambique, Paraguay and Peru had requested to participate as observers.

Requests for hearing (Aides-memoires 01/17, 02/17, 03/17, 04/17, 05/17, 05/17/Add.1 and 06/17)

9. **The Chair** drew attention to aides-memoires 01/17, 02/17, 03/17, 04/17, 05/17, 05/17/Add.1 and 06/17 relating to the Special Committee decision of 20 June 2016 concerning Puerto Rico and to the questions of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas), French Polynesia, Gibraltar, New Caledonia and Western Sahara. In the case of Puerto Rico, the Committee had received a substantial number of requests for hearing, including from pro-independence leader Oscar López Rivera, who had recently been released after spending 36 years in a United States prison.

10. He took it that the Committee wished to accede to the requests for hearing.

11. *It was so decided.*

12. **Mr. Arcia Vivas** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that his delegation rejected the inclusion of the petitioners on Western Sahara, as it had not been the practice of the Special Committee to hear them, and any changes in that practice could have a significant impact on the work of the Committee. The Committee should instead allow the Fourth Committee, the usual venue, to hear petitioners on Western Sahara. In addition, his delegation objected to the references made by two petitioners, attributing to themselves the titles of president and vice-president of regions that were not recognized by the United Nations.

13. **Ms. McGuire** (Grenada) asked the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to clarify whether his delegation was rejecting the requests of all petitioners on Western Sahara.

14. **Mr. Arcia Vivas** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) confirmed that his delegation objected to the inclusion of any petitioners on Western Sahara.

15. **Mr. Rivero Rosario** (Cuba) said that his delegation did not object to the hearing of petitioners from Western Sahara or anywhere else, but petitioners from Western Sahara should be heard in the Fourth Committee so as not to take up time in the Special Committee.

16. **Mr. Bouah-Kamon** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that petitioners from the Sahara region should be allowed to participate because any information pertaining to the Committee's agenda could inform the Committee and help it to form a more objective opinion of the situation on the ground. Additionally, some of the petitioners had already been heard by the Fourth Committee, and allowing them to participate in the Special Committee appeared to conform to its rules of procedure. His delegation hoped for a peaceful and fruitful session.

17. **Mr. Jiménez** (Nicaragua) said that his delegation supported the statements made by the Venezuelan and Cuban delegations. The hearing of petitioners on Western Sahara could waste time and sidetrack the efforts of the Committee. As the Fourth Committee already had a dedicated forum for that process, the Special Committee should not duplicate its work. His delegation therefore rejected the requests for hearing from petitioners on Western Sahara.

18. **Ms. McGuire** (Grenada) said that her delegation supported the statement made by the representative of Côte d'Ivoire and believed that the Special Committee should hear from all sides of an issue in order to make progress in its work. The rules of procedure of the General Assembly allowed for the hearing of all petitioners; otherwise, no one would be heard.

19. **Mr. Sevilla Borja** (Ecuador) said that, given the significance of the question of Western Sahara, all petitioners from all sectors should be heard, regardless of where they came from, but, for practical reasons, the Fourth Committee was the appropriate forum in which to hear them.

20. **Mr. Habib** (Indonesia) said that all petitioners should have the opportunity to express their views. His delegation requested the Secretariat to clarify whether hearing from certain petitioners on Western Sahara would violate any rules of procedure or the Charter of the United Nations, as it understood that the Charter accommodated all petitioners under Article 87 *b*. All delegations should have a clear understanding of the rules governing the treatment of petitioners.

21. **Ms. Elliott** (Secretary of the Committee) said that a question had been posed regarding the list of petitioners requesting a hearing before the Special Committee, and a representative of one delegation had expressed concern about the representatives of a particular region. It would therefore be up to the Committee to decide how it wished to address that concern, which had been supported by other delegations.

22. **The Chair** announced that the meeting would be suspended owing to technical difficulties.

The meeting was suspended at 10.55 a.m. and resumed at 11 a.m.

23. **Ms. Challenger** (Antigua and Barbuda) said that her delegation supported the statements made by the delegations of Côte d'Ivoire and Grenada. The petitioners' requests appeared to be in full conformity with the rules of the Special Committee and the General Assembly, and her delegation saw no reason why they should not be allowed to participate in the discussion.

24. **Mr. Condor** (Saint Kitts and Nevis) said that his delegation supported the statement made by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda. In the interest of fairness and balance, all participants should be allowed to contribute.

25. **Ms. Joseph** (Saint Lucia) said that the Committee should hear petitioners representing the broadest possible range of views. Consequently, all participants should be allowed to contribute.

26. **Ms. Bannis-Roberts** (Dominica) said that her delegation supported the views expressed by the delegations of Antigua and Barbuda, Côte d'Ivoire, Grenada and Saint Lucia, and all participants should be allowed to make a statement.

27. **Ms. Pires** (Timor-Leste) said that all petitioners should be heard, but the Fourth Committee was the appropriate forum for petitioners from Western Sahara to be heard.

28. **Mr. Falouh** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation supported the statement made by the Venezuelan delegation and believed that the issue should be discussed in the Fourth Committee.

29. **Mr. Alemu** (Ethiopia) said that his delegation wondered why the Committee wished to set a precedent now. Given that the Fourth Committee already heard petitioners from Western Sahara every year, his delegation questioned the added value of hearing those petitioners again. Nevertheless, it would be the first to support that practice if it would add value to the Special Committee's proceedings.

30. The Committee should not be bogged down in the debate on that issue when it had more substantive issues to discuss. The question of Western Sahara was very serious and should not be taken lightly. His delegation was therefore saddened by the divisions among Member States, as everyone knew what motivated their positions.

31. **The Chair** said that petitioners on the question of Western Sahara had never been heard in the Special Committee. Mr. Boukhari had spoken on behalf of the Frente Polisario as a representative of the Non-Self-Governing Territory. If there were a legally recognized administering Power, its representative would also speak.

32. The Fourth Committee was the proper forum in which to hear petitioners on that question, as it was the Fourth Committee that adopted the resolutions on Western Sahara. All petitioners were heard in the Fourth Committee, almost 100 of them at its most recent meeting. The Special Committee was under pressure to set a precedent for a few petitioners, but setting such a precedent would lead to dozens more petitioners the following year, which would not add value to its proceedings. The Committee had spent over 30 minutes discussing the matter without making any progress on the substantive issues. The two groups of States were clearly debating a more significant underlying issue.

33. While there may not be a legal basis to deny the petitioners on Western Sahara, there was also no legal basis for the agreements concerning how many individuals spoke on the questions of the other Non-Self-Governing Territories. He therefore called on Committee members to maintain the practice of not hearing petitioners on the issue of Western Sahara.

34. **Mr. Prasad** (India) said that the Secretariat had made it clear that the rules of procedure of the General Assembly did not bar any petitioners from speaking in any forum, including the Special Committee. As a result, the Special Committee should be fair and should give everyone a chance to speak.

35. The Chair should move forward on the issue and allow good sense to prevail. The Committee heard over 50 petitioners on Puerto Rico. It would not therefore be a waste of time to hear a few petitioners on Western Sahara. Instead of spending 40 minutes debating a practice that complied with the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, the Committee would do better to take five minutes to listen to the brief presentations and then move forward.

36. **The Chair** reminded the Committee that he must hear from all States, as it was their right to express differing opinions.

37. **Mr. Cousiño** (Chile) said that the Fourth Committee was the proper forum to receive the petitioners on Western Sahara, as had always been the custom. He had represented Chile in the Special Committee for 17 years, and in that time no petitioners on Western Sahara had been heard. The Committee must remain focused on all issues within its mandate and must not allow itself to be hijacked by a single topic, which was once again the case. It needed to be fair to the issues and needs of the people within all 17 Territories, and much time had already been lost. He was astounded by what had happened at the recent regional seminar; in the 35 years that he had worked in the international arena, he had never seen people resort to that kind of violence. His delegation urged the Committee to take up another issue, as further debate would only serve to lose more time. Some individuals wished to break the Committee and render it useless, which was unacceptable to his delegation.

38. **Mr. Arancibia** Fernández (Plurinational State of Bolivia) said that petitioners on Western Sahara should be heard in the Fourth Committee, in accordance with current practice.

39. **Ms. McGuire** (Grenada) said that there was no legal barrier preventing the Special Committee from hearing the three petitioners on Western Sahara. There were 56 petitioners on Puerto Rico and 4 on the Malvinas Islands. If the Committee could not reach consensus on the requests to hear petitioners on the question of Western Sahara, those requests would be rejected given that the Committee operated by consensus. If that were to happen, her delegation would then reject all requests to hear petitioners on all questions.

40. **The Chair** asked what the representative of Grenada was proposing, aside from stating that her delegation would be angry if its position was not accepted and was therefore threatening to block all petitioners.

41. **Ms. McGuire** (Grenada) said that she took issue with the characterization of her statement as a threat. It was simply the position of her delegation that, in all fairness, everyone should be heard on each of the issues. There was no legal barrier to prevent a petitioner from addressing the Committee. If the Committee's position was that petitioners should be heard in the Fourth Committee then that policy should be applied without bias to all questions, not just to the Western Saharan question.

42. **The Chair** said that her statement was in fact a threat, as her delegation was saying that if its position was not accepted, it would block all petitioners from speaking. There were in fact six petitioners on Western Sahara, in addition to Mr. Boukhari, who spoke on behalf of the Frente Polisario as a representative of the Non-Self-Governing Territory, not as a petitioner.

43. Given that the same States continued to debate the issue and were unlikely to change their positions, he suggested that the issue should be resolved with a vote, as was the practice in the General Assembly.

44. *It was so decided.*

The meeting was suspended at 11.25 a.m. and resumed at 11.30 a.m.

45. **The Chair** said that a recorded vote had been requested on hearing petitioners on Western Sahara in the Special Committee.

46. *A recorded vote was taken on hearing petitioners on Western Sahara in the Special Committee.*

In favour:

Antigua and Barbuda, Côte d'Ivoire, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Sierra Leone.

Against:

Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Chile, Cuba, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Syrian Arab Republic, Timor-Leste, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

Abstaining:

China, Ethiopia, Iraq, Mali, Russian Federation.

47. *The request to hear petitioners on Western Sahara was rejected by 8 votes to 7, with 5 abstentions.*

48. **Ms. McGuire** (Grenada), expressing consternation at the characterization of her statement as a threat, said that each member of the Special Committee had the right to express its national position. Grenada had not issued any threats and it was highly irregular for her delegation to be so accused.

49. **The Chair** said that he would not debate the issue with the representative of Grenada. Speaking as the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, he said that he had not intended to cause offence to Grenada or to any Caribbean State and had never done so. On the contrary, his country, which was usually the offended party, had always had great respect for the Caribbean. However, speaking as Chair, he said that a State could not take the position that it would block all petitioners if its proposal was not accepted.

50. **Mr. Rivero Rosario** (Cuba) said that the members of the Committee should all reflect on the fact that they had needed to resort to a vote to resolve the issue and his delegation stressed the continued value of reaching agreements by consensus.

51. **Mr. Habib** (Indonesia) said that Indonesia engaged in all discussions on decolonization, but his delegation had been unable to participate in the vote because its position on the sensitive issues examined by the Committee, including the participation of petitioners on Western Sahara, must be determined by a high-ranking official from Indonesia. However, all issues were negotiable, and consensus should always be the means of decision-making in the Committee. His delegation therefore regretted the need to resort to a vote and appealed to Committee members to ensure that a vote would not be necessary on every issue, as there were a number of items still to discuss.

52. **Ms. Bannis-Roberts** (Dominica) said that taking a position on a matter should not be considered a threat and that the members of the Committee were simply seeking balance and equity.

53. **Mr. Hilale** (Observer for Morocco) said that it was important to preserve decorum and respect for differences of opinion within the Committee. His delegation condemned the use of violence, both physical and verbal. Having always respected the rules and procedures, Morocco took note of the results of the vote, but the Committee was clearly divided and the outcome would have been very different had all delegations been present. As several delegations had mentioned, the issues addressed by the Committee were not resolved by voting but rather through dialogue and respect for the rules and procedures.

54. The Secretariat had stated that the rules of procedure of the General Assembly granted all petitioners the right to speak. However, it was clear that the principle of freedom and the right of each person to speak as a petitioner could be violated by the Committee. Morocco considered the opposition expressed by several States to be politically motivated.

55. **The Chair** asked the delegation of Morocco, as an observer, to respect the decision of the members of the Committee and to refrain from commenting on the substance of the issue.

56. **Mr. Hilale** (Observer for Morocco) said that he was not commenting on the result of the vote but was simply reacting to the comments that had been made before the vote. The Committee could not justify its decision to deny petitioners the chance to speak in only one case. Some delegations had questioned the added

value of hearing the petitioners, but the same question could be asked of all the petitioners who would speak in the next two weeks, as they all spoke before the Fourth Committee as well. His delegation also wished to correct the claim made by some States that there had not previously been any petitioners on the question of the Sahara region. In fact, a petitioner had always submitted a request and the Committee had always granted it.

57. His delegation respected the Committee's decision but called for the principle of consensus to be respected. Never in the Committee's history had there been a vote on whether to hear a petitioner, nor had the Committee barred a petitioner from speaking, until that day.

58. **Ms. Challenger** (Antigua and Barbuda), referring to the statement made by the representative of Grenada, said that it was highly irregular for a Chair to characterize a national position as a threat.

59. **Mr. Sevilla Borja** (Ecuador) said that his delegation was pleased that the discussion had been conducted professionally, with reasoned positions and without personal attacks and violence, which had unfortunately not been the case at the Caribbean regional seminar in May 2017 and in other meetings of the Committee. The Committee should seek further negotiations and should not resort to voting in the future. Nevertheless, the debate and the subsequent vote had made it clear that the question of Western Sahara was an issue that fell within the purview of the Special Committee and the decolonization process.

60. **Mr. Boukadoum** (Observer for Algeria) reminded the Committee that no petitioner on Western Sahara had ever spoken in the Special Committee. Those petitioners had been allowed to speak in the Fourth Committee for 42 years, whereas the petitioners on other Territories were only able to address the Special Committee. His delegation would prefer for the Committee to work by consensus, but the Committee must nonetheless make its decisions as it saw fit, and observers should not interfere in its work.

61. **Mr. Bouah-Kamon** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that his delegation had requested to hear the petitioners because their contributions did add value to the work of the Committee. Nevertheless, the Committee had decided not to hear them and its decision was sovereign. Each State had the right to express its position, and expressing a national position was not a threat. In order for the members of the Committee to work together, that kind of suggestion must be avoided. His delegation regretted that there had been a vote and urged the Committee to seek consensus in its decisions.

62. **The Chair** said that the decision should have been adopted by consensus, but the positions were unwavering. As Chair, his job was to ensure that the position of the majority prevailed, and he had turned to a decision by vote as a last resort. It had been done before, in his election. The Committee was extremely divided on the question of Western Sahara. Some States were in favour of self-determination and others were not, which seemed illogical to him. The issue needed to be discussed at length, at the appropriate time. The Committee would now end the debate on the issue and advance in its work. He apologized to the petitioners who were waiting to speak and to the States who wished to discuss other items.

63. **Mr. Jiménez** (Nicaragua) asked whether the representative of the Department of Public Information could explain why the current meeting was the only one not being broadcast on the United Nations website.

64. **Mr. Tisovszky** (Department of Public Information) said that, to his knowledge, the meeting was being webcast live in all official languages.

65. **Mr. Jiménez** (Nicaragua) said that the page would not load.

Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations (A/72/62 and A/AC.109/2017/L.4)

66. **The Chair** drew attention to the report of the Secretary-General pertaining to the transmittal of information from the administering Powers called for under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations (A/72/62).

67. **Mr. Rivero Rosario** (Cuba) said that the information submitted by administering Powers under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations informed the decisions of the Committee, and, by extension, those of the Decolonization Unit of the Department of Political Affairs. It must therefore be accurate and current and reflect the reality of the people in those Territories. According to the Secretary-General's report (A/72/62), some States had failed to submit the required information in 2016. The submission of information by the administering Powers pursuant to Article 73 *e* was a requirement and a commitment that should be honoured. In addition, the work of the Committee would greatly benefit from the presence of the administering Powers, their active participation in Committee meetings and their regular attendance of the Caribbean and Pacific regional seminars. The delegation of Cuba would continue to extend an invitation to the administering Powers until they agreed to attend.

68. **Mr. Arcia Vivas** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that his delegation fully supported the statement made by the representative of Cuba. The administering Powers must submit information on all Non-Self-Governing Territories.

69. **The Chair** drew attention to the draft resolution on information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations (A/AC.109/2017/L.4) and its revisions.

Draft resolution A/AC.109/2017/L.4

70. *Draft resolution A/AC.109/2017/L.4 was adopted*

Dissemination of information on decolonization (A/AC.109/2017/18 and A/AC.109/2017/L.5)

71. **Mr. Tisovszky** (Department of Public Information), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the dissemination of information on decolonization during the period from April 2016 to March 2017 (A/AC.109/2017/18), said that, during the reporting period, the Department had issued numerous press releases on the decolonization activities of various United Nations bodies and had deployed a press officer to the Pacific regional seminar in Managua and the Caribbean regional seminar in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

72. The Department had continued to update the United Nations decolonization website and had featured decolonization-related issues on other special websites and its social media accounts. The United Nations News Centre had provided coverage of decolonization events, activities and issues in the six official languages, as well as in Portuguese and Kiswahili. The Television News and Facilities Unit had covered formal open meetings of the Special Committee and the related press conferences, as well as relevant sessions of the Fourth Committee and General Assembly. Furthermore, video coverage of meetings and events had been available on the United Nations webcast website. The Photo Unit had also covered a number of events, including an exhibit held at United Nations Headquarters in December 2016 to commemorate the fifty-sixth anniversary of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. Lastly, the topic of decolonization was regularly incorporated in the guided tours of Headquarters and the United Nations Offices at Geneva, Nairobi and Vienna.

73. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library had continued to provide research and information services on the subject of decolonization, including specific requests sent through the online "Ask Dag" platform, and had continued to upload important United Nations documents on decolonization through the Official Documents System in an effort to increase accessibility. The Department had published the updated version of the leaflet "What the United Nations can do to assist Non-Self-Governing Territories", which included a brief description of the activities of various United Nations bodies and profiles of the 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories. The leaflet was available on the website in the six official languages and in hardcopy in English, French and Spanish.

74. The Department of Public Information, working in close cooperation with the Decolonization Unit of the Department of Political Affairs, would continue to disseminate information on decolonization and highlight the need for the immediate and full implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, using its various multilingual platforms to reach a broad global audience. The work of the Special Committee would continue to remain a priority of the outreach activities of the Department.

75. **Mr. Rivero Rosario** (Cuba), recalling General Assembly resolution 71/121 on the dissemination of information on decolonization, said that the Department of Public Information should expand its efforts to ensure the widest possible dissemination of information on decolonization, using all available media, with particular emphasis on the options for self-determination available to the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories. The Department needed to work more systematically to disseminate the Committee's work, which helped to raise awareness and promote social engagement in the decolonization process. It should publish and update the decolonization website content in all of the official United Nations languages, not just English. The information should be of high quality and timely, in order to promote good decision-making and a better understanding of the decolonization process. It should be published proactively and in real time.

76. It had been 57 years since the adoption of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, and yet there were still 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories and others that were not classified as such, as was the case of Puerto Rico. The Department must therefore continue to inform the peoples of those Territories of their options and raise awareness of the importance of international support for the decolonization process. It should also provide a report detailing proposed actions that could help to advance decolonization more quickly.

77. **Ms. Kadota** (Decolonization Unit, Department of Political Affairs) said that her Department continued to work closely with the Department of Public Information to keep the United Nations decolonization website up to date in all official languages. For example, it had immediately uploaded all available statements and discussion papers from the 2017 Caribbean regional seminar upon its conclusion. The Decolonization Unit was also responsible for preparing the annual Secretariat working papers on each of the 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories and uploading them to the decolonization website upon publication.

78. The significant increase in the number of page views of the decolonization website was a testament to its growing popularity. The Department of Political Affairs intended to further enhance the content and modernize the design and interface to make it more user-friendly and informative. The Decolonization Unit and the Department were committed to continuing their efforts to disseminate information on decolonization.

79. **The Chair** said that the statement made by the Secretary-General at the meeting held on 22 February 2017 had still not been published, despite repeated requests by the Committee. The issue of the dissemination of information should be given more priority and the Department of Public Information and the Department of Political Affairs should use the available budget resources to update all materials. He requested their support for a successful Week of Solidarity with the Peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories, which was fundamental to disseminating information on the work of the Committee and the situation of the Territories.

80. He drew attention to the draft resolution on dissemination of information on decolonization (A/AC.109/2017/L.5) and its revisions.

Draft resolution A/AC.109/2017/L.5

81. *Draft resolution A/AC.109/2017/L.5 was adopted*

Question of sending visiting missions to Territories (A/AC.109/2017/L.6)

82. **The Chair** drew attention to the draft resolution on the question of sending visiting missions to Territories (A/AC.109/2017/L.6) and its revisions.

83. The Committee had been unable to conduct visiting missions during the previous two years, owing to a lack of cooperation from the administering Powers or because of a lack of consensus within the Committee. At the Committee's second meeting, the representative of the Frente Polisario had requested that the Committee should conduct a visiting mission to Western Sahara, but a consensus had not been reached. As a result, the draft resolution requested the Chair of the Special Committee, in collaboration with the members of the Bureau, to develop, in a timely manner, a plan for conducting visiting missions to the Non-Self-Governing Territories. A paragraph would be added to the draft resolution to exempt Gibraltar and the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) from the plan, given that those Territories involved sovereignty disputes. Nevertheless, the Committee must comply with its mandate to conduct at least one visiting mission per year. In that regard, progress had been made in discussions with France with a view to visiting New Caledonia.

84. **Mr. Bouah-Kamon** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that the question of sending visiting missions to Territories had been the subject of a lengthy discussion during the Committee's second meeting. While the visit to New Caledonia had been adopted by consensus, his delegation had been surprised that a proposal to visit the Sahara region had been included in the draft resolution, as some delegations had requested further discussion on that issue.

85. His delegation reiterated its firm reservations to conducting a visiting mission to the Sahara region. The Security Council was the appropriate body to examine the question of the Sahara region, and the proposed visit would be in violation of the provisions of Article 12 of the Charter of the United Nations. Pursuant to the resolutions of the Security Council, a political process had already been implemented with a view to finding a mutually acceptable solution. His delegation therefore opposed the proposed visiting mission and once again called for the practice of consensus to be respected.

86. **The Chair** said that the draft resolution merely reflected the request made by the representative of the Frente Polisario and did not contain a proposal or a decision on conducting a visiting mission to Western Sahara. He could not erase requests made by representatives of Non-Self-Governing Territories. The representative of Antigua and Barbuda had suggested that the Chair should establish a plan to conduct visiting missions to all Territories, with the exception of Gibraltar and the Falkland Islands (Malvinas).

87. **Ms. McGuire** (Grenada) said that the delegation of Antigua and Barbuda had suggested visiting the Territories in the Caribbean, and it was the delegation of Algeria, an observer Member State, that had suggested visiting all of the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

88. Her delegation suggested deleting the paragraph of the draft resolution containing the request by the representative of Frente Polisario, and it also took issue with the reference to Frente Polisario as the representative of Western Sahara. Additionally, her delegation could not support paragraph 2 as drafted. While it took note of the fact that Gibraltar and the Malvinas Islands were disputed Territories, her delegation felt that all 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories should be included in the plan as they were all on the Committee's agenda. In addition, the paragraph should be revised to incorporate language that would call for the plan to be submitted for the consideration and approval of the Committee.

89. **The Chair** said that the Committee must undertake its work without making exceptions, but it must also comply with General Assembly resolutions, which classified the disputes over the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) and Gibraltar as sovereignty disputes, not as a self-determination issue. It would therefore not be appropriate for the Committee to conduct visits to those Territories.

90. **Ms. Pires** (Timor-Leste) said that her delegation strongly supported the proposal to develop a plan for conducting visiting missions to the Non-Self-Governing Territories, with the exception of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) and Gibraltar. With only three years remaining in the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, it was essential that the Committee should undertake those visits and ascertain the situation in those Territories. For that reason, her delegation fully supported the inclusion of paragraph 2 as drafted, as well as the reference to the request by the Frente Polisario for a visit to Western Sahara.

91. **Ms. Challenger** (Antigua and Barbuda) said that her delegation had proposed that the Committee should visit the Territories in the Caribbean specifically. With regard to the draft resolution, the paragraph containing the request from the representative of Frente Polisario should be deleted because, even though it was merely a request, its inclusion could jeopardize the ongoing political processes under the Security Council.

92. **Mr. Boukadoum** (Observer for Algeria) said that some delegations had used the term Sahara instead of Western Sahara. The Sahara encompassed 9,200,000 square kilometres from the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea and covered 11 countries. While the visiting mission would be very welcome in Algeria, which was part of the Sahara, the Committee should be precise when referring to Western Sahara, which covered 266,000 square kilometres.

93. Algeria had long supported a visiting mission to Western Sahara, and the Committee had already taken the decision to conduct such a visit, in 1991 in fact; it was now a matter of implementing that decision. His delegation rejected the arguments that had been made against a visit. There was no political process, and a number of the issues on the agenda of the Security Council had also been taken up by various Committees and the General Assembly.

94. **Mr. Arcia Vivas** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that his delegation supported the proposal to develop a plan for conducting visiting missions to the Non-Self-Governing Territories, with the exception of the Malvinas Islands and Gibraltar since those Territories were the subject of sovereignty disputes.

95. **Mr. Habib** (Indonesia) said that the introduction of new, substantial elements in the current draft of the resolution required further discussion among the members of the Committee. More time was also needed to discuss the various requests to visit other Non-Self-Governing Territories. Given that the resolution required approval by the Committee, his delegation looked forward to proposals from the delegation of Grenada and others.

96. **Mr. Hilale** (Observer for Morocco) said that his delegation did not understand why the draft resolution did not mention the requests made by the representatives of other Non-Self-Governing Territories. His delegation would have no objection to the mention of the request made by the representative of the Frente Polisario if all requests were included. The reality was that the Committee was constantly focused on the question of the Moroccan Sahara in a discriminatory manner. The Chair relied on General Assembly resolutions to explain his position on a number of issues, but disregarded the Charter of the United Nations and the Security Council resolutions in the case of the Moroccan Sahara. Regrettably, his delegation had to disagree with the representative of Algeria who had denied the existence of an ongoing political process. In fact, the Secretary-General had just nominated a personal envoy to undertake that work.

97. A visit to any Territory required the cooperation of the administering Power. Morocco would not extend an invitation or approve any visit from the Special Committee to Moroccan Sahara out of respect for the Charter, the Security Council resolutions and the ongoing political process. Morocco reaffirmed its commitment to that process and to working towards a mutually agreeable solution.

98. **The Chair** said that the two other requests for visiting missions concerned Gibraltar and the Falkland Islands (Malvinas). However, the General Assembly had established that those Territories were the subject of sovereignty disputes, not questions of self-determination, and that was why those requests were not included in the draft resolution. As Morocco had demonstrated, one of the obstacles facing the visiting missions was a lack of cooperation from administering Powers. He suggested that the Committee should accept the proposal of Indonesia to engage in informal discussions on the draft resolution to allow the members of the Committee to reach consensus.

99. **Ms. Gueguen** (France) said that, while France was not opposed to the idea of a new visiting mission to New Caledonia, her delegation could not yet provide a definitive answer. However, New Caledonia could not be the only Territory visited by the Committee, as the previous visiting mission just two years prior had also been sent to New Caledonia. In addition, the timing of the mission must align with the current process of self-determination and the forthcoming referendum. Sending a mission in the very near future would not be useful, on account of the established timeline. France remained committed to continued discussion with the Committee on the question of New Caledonia in the upcoming weeks.

100. **The Chair** expressed appreciation for the open dialogue with France and its constructive attitude, which was not the position taken by other administering Powers. The proposed plan for conducting visiting missions must take into account all of the elements that required coordination with the administering Powers in order for the missions to be successful.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.